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ABSTRACT

A rethinking of the definition of excellence is called for. It is suggested that a definition of excellence must go beyond narrow issues and include attention to the nature of the teacher, the subject matter that needs to be transformed and communicated, and the diversity of learners. Upon this triad of concerns, educators are challenged not to passively accept conventional wisdom but to be reflective and active in seeking an adequate definition of the meaning of excellence in teacher education. (JD)

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PERSPECTIVES AND VISIONS: RATIONALE FOR "FOUNDATIONS" IN TEACHER EDUCATION*

Maxine Greene

Teachers work in multiple contexts, ranging from the immediate contexts of their classrooms to the larger contexts of political and social life. There is the immediacy of the felt encounter, the memo, the workbook, the blackboard, the bell. There is the sense of the surrounding institution with its hierarchy, its demands, its rules—the faces appearing, the voices sounding, the calls to accountability. There is the community or the protesting parent, now by a group of parents or a school board or a district office; and, somewhere in the distance, there are the state and federal agencies with their regulations and requirements, their determinations of what is happening and what ought to happen within the schools.

And now, with all sorts of spotlights abruptly turned on education, with a spate of reports emerging from all sorts of commissions and foundations and centers, teachers are expected to direct their attention to all kinds of articulations of where American education is deficient, of what its goals should be, of what changes ought immediately be made. The token word, the magic word, the one that sums up what the report writers and the investigators wish to be viewed as the central goal is "excellence," presented (not for the first time in our history) as an antonym of "mediocrity." Given what has been taken for granted for a decade, it refers for most people to higher achievement levels as reflected in test scores and to a higher level of what is called "literacy." Literacy, sometimes specified as mastery of the English language and/or higher attainment (particularly in mathematics, science, writing, and the use of computers) is presented as a necessity for a "nation at risk." That means that we are to strive for excellence in the name of productivity, national defense, and technological primacy in the world. It also appears to mean that our priorities are to change: we are asked, in the "national interest," to set aside our relatively recent concern for equity.

It is interesting to ponder older views—arete, say, Erasmus's notion of the moral virtues and Christian piety; Jefferson's idea of developing the reasoning faculties of the youth, enlarging their minds, cultivating their morals; Cardinal Newman's description of the person "who has learned to think and to reason and to compare and to discriminate and to analyze . . ." There is something strange about the report writers' choosing to tap into the old humanist tradition in their effort to legitimate a certain range of largely technical competencies to promote what is called the "national interest." More recent statements having to do with excellence—John Gardner's *Excellence: Can We Be Equal and Excellent Too?*, the Rockefeller brothers' report of several years ago—did not define the term so narrowly; and it is tempting to wonder why.

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How are teachers and teachers-to-be to respond to what is being said? How are they to define its relevance for what they do each day? One would hope that, at the very least, some of them have been empowered to conceptualize what is happening against the background of our history, to distinguish between polemic and serious proposals, to understand that values and goals cannot simply be legislated into existence—that, in some sense, they are always in the making in a continually changing world. But, when I think of the perspective of the commissions and the difference between that perspective and the one required of administrators and teachers in actual schools, I think of the difference identified at the beginning of Thomas Mann's *Confessions of Felix Krull, Confidence Man:* between seeing the world small and seeing it big. Great men, Felix thinks, statesmen and empire-builders and other lenders "must be so constituted as to see the world small, like a chessboard, or they would never . . . deal so boldly and cavalierly with the weal and woe of the individual." The alternative is to regard the world and the people in it as something great and significant, or taking "a magnifying and respectful view." Commission members and report writers, with rare exception, see the world small or at least see the individuals within it in such a way. Educators who are actually present, in classrooms or principals' offices or district offices, would find it hard to look over the individuals they are expected to educate and tell them that national security depends upon their doing well on their chemistry tests or that the likelihood of economic primacy hangs on their exerting themselves in writing and math. More important, practicing educators cannot look upon students as members of an aggregate, or "cases," or instances of some larger condition. Teaching is triadic, most of us know; it involves someone teaching something to someone—or, I would prefer to say, enabling someone to learn how to learn. The point, though, is that every term of the triad has to be attended to: the living being who is the teacher, intentionally trying to provoke persons to reach beyond themselves, to become different, to enter a state more desirable than the one they are presently in; the subject matter, conceived as a specific symbol system, a structure of related concepts, a perspective, a set of know-hows—all in the process of transformation into communicable, appropriately communicable form; and the learners in their particularity and variety, with their diverse biographies, their different degrees of interests, their different levels of readiness and skill. None of this makes the call to excellence inherently meaningless; but it does demand that the voices of practitioners be heard. It does demand a testing, if you will, of the abstract formulation—whether overly optimistic or overly carping—against lived situations, against what is empirically known.

Lawrence Stedman and Marshall Smith, for example, writing about the reform proposals in the *Contemporary Education Review*, look at such indicators of decline in achievement as those presented by the College Entrance Examination Board and the National Assessment of Educational Progress. It is true that very high test scores have dropped, and there has been a steady decline in science achievement scores of 17-years-olds; but Stedman and Smith stress the poor treatment of the data and the "abominable nature of national data on school performance." Their point is not that educators should not respond to the call to improved achievement; it is simply that the existing evidence does not warrant some of the sweeping claims. Changing populations have not been taken into account, for instance; incommensurable samples were used in determining that high school curricula had been diluted; favorable comparisons with

other countries were ignored. Similar things might be said about the proposals for longer school days and longer school years. Trying to make sense of it all, educators must at least hold in mind the likelihood that many of the reports are responding more to economic problems in this country and to still questionable predictions about our high-tech future; they are political documents, it should be understood, as much as they are educational reports. And, clearly, educators of all sorts have to keep asking—and have to be enabled to ask, provided the language for asking—"What do we want for our children? What does all this mean for the practitioner? What does it actually mean?"

Whether or not you read this moment of our history as I do, whether or not you feel yourselves to be living in a highly administered society where power often wears a blank and smiling face, where you have no chance to *explain* to the communicators how it is and how it feels to live as you live and do what you do—no chance to persuade them of what you yourselves believe to be good and right, where the words fall about you like hailstones very often, words of reassurance mingled with talk of megatons and first-strike capability and early warning systems and peacekeepers or peacemakers. You must admit some degree of perplexity with regard to the prescriptions being issued with respect to education—not merely the talk of dangerous declines, but talk about discipline and prayers, about voucher systems and tax credits, about—yes—maximum competencies for every child. *The New Yorker*, a while ago, writing about the news blackout on the Grenada invasion, talked about the way in which the people "dispossessed of their right to participate in the conduct of the people's business, have become a mere gallery of spectators of their own affairs." Not only do I believe this a catastrophe for a democratic citizenry (one to which public education ought somehow to attend); I believe it describes the way many of us in education are being made to feel. That is why we have to choose ourselves, as never before, with respect to what is being said and left unsaid—and commit ourselves afresh, especially those of us who are teachers and teacher educators, to what we believe about the search for meaning, clarity, intelligence, community, compassion, imagination, ordinary decency. Irving Howe, in this connection, said a few days ago (while at a humanities conference in New York) that "The very word 'excellence' ought to make us cringe a little, so thoroughly has it been assimilated to the prose styles of commission reports, letters of recommendation, and hair spray commercials." He said the word was being used as a code word for "educational Reaganism," which he associated with tougher testing, increased discipline, and merit pay; and, like others, he saw it as anti-humanistic in what it implied. Be that as it may, we are challenged to try to reconcile what is being asked today with what we know—from experience—about injustices and deficiencies in our society, about the ubiquitous sense of powerlessness and passivity afflicting people, about the discrepancy between existing value systems and the technology we have at hand.

Clearly, I want to hear our community speak out—and sometimes rebel—in the name of reflectiveness and perspective and social concern, and on behalf of a common world. It is probably obvious that I believe teachers-to-be cannot adequately cope with it all if they are not introduded to historical explanation and ways of gaining historical perspective on what is happening, and if they are not equipped to do philosophy with respect to the language, the prescriptions, the assertions of value evident around us—

to clarify what they are hearing with some degree of rigor, to break through obfuscations, to reconstruct arguments, to ponder what is worthwhile and what is worth striving for, to think about their own thinking, consciously to create meanings as they live. None of this, as you well know, happens "naturally." The ability to "read" or to interpret social and political situations does not occur without becoming involved with experience and lived situations. It has to do with the funding of meanings, or the sedimentation of meanings, all sorts of meanings. These become part of and indeed constitute the self; they compose the background against which new encounters, new experiences are projected. To educate someone, it seems to me, is—in a very fundamental sense—to add to the richness and multiplicity of such meanings. It is important to remember (as Dewey also said) that the realm of meanings is far wider than that of true-false meanings. It includes moral meanings, poetic meanings. It includes, I would add, the kinds of meanings some people achieve when they realize they are capable, along with others, of repairing what is deficient and painful, solving complex social problems, altering—to some degree—the order of things. It must be said as well that, although we are all individually "condemned to meaning," to making our own sense of things and finding some reason for living our lives, the ways of knowing that we must undertake, the questioning, the wondering are not of the sort we can wholly invent for ourselves.

One of my concerns in the face of the recent reports has to do with a narrowing, a channelling of human possibility. If stress is placed on a prescribed range of literacies, if human beings are thought of primarily as "resources" to promote the national interest, opportunities for differential growth and development may be severely limited. We need but think of those whose strengths and talents are not especially prized today: the Henry David Thoreaus of tomorrow, the Margaret Fullers, the James Baldwins, the Helen Caldecotts, the Gregory Batesons, the Tim Berrigans. I think of the persons peculiarly qualified to start storefront schools in inhospitable neighborhoods, those out to save the rivers, those who engage in civil disobedience to stop nuclear war. I know full well that there has often been tension in this country between a single standard of achievement and bearing and being—and a sense of the richness of multiplicity; and I want to keep the tension in existence. Teaching Emerson's *The American Scholar* the other day, I was reminded of that when he talked about "the literature of the poor, the feelings of the child, the philosophy of the street, the meaning of a household life" which he said were the "topics of the time." And, by chance, I happened on an article by Irving Howe in *The New Republic* having to do with the "use and abuse of excellence" and found him reminding us that the cultural standards in our country have never been as fixed or secure as we sometimes think—but "must always be subject to the bewilderments of a rapidly changing culture. It means," he said, "that the small community of intellectuals, writers, and scholars professionally devoted to the life of culture, though sometimes fancying itself an aristocracy of letters beyond any soiling plebian touch, must be ready to welcome into its ranks newcomers who bring with them the unruly, the uncouth, the 'barbaric'." I thought of Whitman's great "en masse" when I read that, Whitman who—for John Dewey—was the "seer" of democracy, viewed as "a name for a way of life of free and enriching communion." And this summoned up for me the hope and the tensions associated with the constant stream of newcomers into this country—with their

different cultures, accents, standards, and capacities. And it occurred to me how much worse than small communities of intellectuals may be government commissions and report writers, if they are given the power and the platform to prescribe to those who have no voice and who feel bound to comply.

There is a warrant for thinking of excellence, then, in a plural sense. We might want to look adjectivally at such excellences as consisting in the development of particular capacities like critico-creative thinking, integrity, autonomy, fidelity, imaginativeness, adventurousness, self-reflectiveness, cooperativeness, moral sensitivity even strength of will or persistence or stubbornness. Now it is clear enough that it means little to speak of a capacity like critico-creative thinking without taking into account the ways in which such a capacity is displayed or finds expression in some recognizable form of activity—solving problems in mathematics, decoding and achieving meaning in a short story, interpreting media messages, responding to threats to the environment, organizing literacy programs, reading lived situations to discover what needs to be repaired. Or, as we are more likely to do, we might consider how they are displayed or might be displayed in one or another of the subject matter areas, in and through the academic disciplines, or in crafts or in games. Any one of these activities may offer evidence of a particular kind of intelligence or the use of several intelligences; and, even as each one has what Gardner describes as its own "developmental trajectory," the capacities I am speaking of cut across the various frames. Again, I would use the term "excellence" to refer to a capacity and its expression rather than to what Gardner calls the "potential" he identifies with intelligence.

Let me offer two analogies, and you can think of more. The first is found in my experience at an aesthetic education institute where I teach in the summers. Often, when I arrive at the Juilliard School at 8 o'clock on a hot morning, I meet a young woman Balanchine dancer, who tells me she has been at the barre or, perhaps, in class since 6:30 or 7 a.m. She has not been at the barre or in class because she has been instructed to do so or because doing so is a prerequisite for her present job at our institute. She has spent her early morning hours that way because that is part of what being a Balanchine dancer means, and she has chosen herself to be a member of that particular normative community, governed as it is by certain standards having to do with effort and shape and muscular control and flexibility. It seems more or less self-evident that she possesses what is called bodily-kinesthetic intelligence—involving a sense of timing, an ability to use her body in particularly skillful ways and to control her own movements in ways most of us cannot. Simply to assert that she posesses that kind of non-verbal intelligence, that she can speak the language of the body, would be meaningless if she had no opportunity to learn to dance or to mime or to act. But there is more. She is, for me, a model of excellence because she continues striving, on her own initiative, in accord with the norms governing her particular dance company, to become what is thought of as a Balanchine dancer—and because the striving and the choosing of herself will never end, so long as she is in that world. That means, for me, that she is expressing such capacities as integrity, autonomy of choice, imaginativeness, fidelity, if not necessarily critical thinking or analytic skills. If she had not developed such capacities, or if she had had no opportunity to display them, it is difficult to think of her realizing her potential—or actually *becoming* intelligent in a bodily-kinesthetic way. Also, it would be hard to speak of excellence. I would

emphasize that what is important is her quality of mind, the manner in which she addresses herself to her project, the ways in which she deals with the situations in which she finds herself.

Another analogy I have in mind is to be found in the work two students did in establishing a store-front day-care center in a neighborhood in New York City. In this case, too, the norms governing a particular community were named and attended to—not simply those governing the people who establish and teach in day-care centers, but those relevant to the people on the blocks concerned. It meant coming to know the regulations, making the requisite preparations to satisfy the health department, securing contributions of toys and paints and plastic cups, visiting—day after day, night after night—working mothers, grandmothers, teen-age sisters or brothers, talking, talking with little children—freely working, honing a variety of intelligences (linguistic, certainly, logical, personal—making distinctions, effecting relations with others, understanding others) and several more. At once, these students are expressing capacities like integrity, concern, fidelity, imaginativeness, critico-creative thinking, and the rest. I would apply the word 'excellent' to what they are doing; but I am much afraid that, according to present-day definitions, their prowess and proficiency would seem insignificant, if they were to become visible at all.

Now I grant that my dancer friend and my students had already mastered the basics or the skills fundamental to what they are doing before coming on stage or on the street. What the dancer does today on her own initiative would be inconceivable if she had not mastered—through stringent and repetitive effort, through what can only be called training, the foundations: the positions, the extensions, and the rest. She might say that, rigorously drilled though she was, she actually began learning when she began teaching herself: going *en pointe* before her mirror at home, trying out certain contractions in new combinations, going beyond what she was drilled to do in ballet school. The training for my day-care center friends was not so specific or so specialized; but, clearly, they had to learn the ropes where dealing with state agencies was concerned, and even where ethnic minorities and their children were concerned. And it was only when they began walking up and down those blocks, ringing bells, talking to people, going back to check that the windows were secure at the center, that there were fire extinguishers and the rest, that they began teaching themselves—began actually learning to learn. Many of you recall going beyond like that (if you were lucky enough to have someone empower you)—practicing with syllables and words, making up rhymes, saying the alphabet backwards, spelling out words you had never learned on building walls and street signs. If you were really fortunate (and many of us were) you managed, largely through your own undertakings, to grasp (like that student dancer) a way of doing things. When you did, you may have begun playing around with what you had mastered—using cuisenaire rods, say, diagramming sentences, keeping a log, taking apart and putting together alarm clocks, reading books your mother took out of the library for herself—practicing what you had gained in your own way, making it your own.

Obviously, the ways of doing things are more or less specific to each field: learning the ropes when it comes to decoding sentences is different from learning the ropes when it comes to multiplication tables. The principle is the same, however. Enabling someone to master the basics in any field involves making available a

method, a mode of procedure; and, I would hope, somehow explaining that it represents a *modus operandi* that works for many people and is worth trying out, and that there are always others that might be tried or even invented, depending on where the person begins. What has been learned in free writing, for instance, may be practiced on one's own, tried out in new formats, with all the risk of error it entails. One can take the risk thoughtfully and with a degree of care, correcting the errors, for instance, before going on. Or, having experimented with the free writing model, one may decide that it is better to plan what one is going to say, shape it somehow in advance. One may come upon a better way of proceeding as one continues to teach oneself. To work from the rudiments one has mastered in this fashion is quite, quite different from being required to master a range of discrete competencies or to gain a set of what some call "knowledges." There will be an awareness of process, a consciousness of exploration, of continually moving to what is not yet.

Much the same applies, I believe, to learning the cognitive styles that identify the various "provinces of meaning" in which the various disciplines are found. To move, say, from the common sense world in which people live their everyday lives along with others into the world of natural science demands a certain kind of knowing how. Not only are there specific protocols to be mastered, a mode of theorizing to be learned; there is a distinctive language into which to move, a symbol system; and there is a way of directing attention to those aspects of the world selected out for study that is different from the way of directing attention to, let us say, the social or the human world, populated with fellow human beings. In the province of the natural sciences, as in the province of the social sciences or of the arts, there are favored cognitive styles, compatible modes of procedure of sense-making; but, in the gaining of perspective each province makes possible, there is room for personal interpretation, selective attending, risk-taking. Individuals inhabit—or dwell in—a particular province with some awareness of their own biography, life-story, life-project; and they ought to do so for the sake of attending more mindfully and more solicitously to the situations in which they find themselves.

I would want to lay particular emphasis upon a taking into account of the actually lived world—where the search for meaning originates and where it finds its consummations. What we call our knowledge constructs or the sets of know-how that make them possible are layered on our perceived landscapes, the world as patterned by childhood explorations, imagining, perceiving. There is a perspectival way of seeing, hearing, knowing that is associated with childhood, a sense of horizon and wanting to leap beyond. For me, educating in any sphere ought to involve a recognition of those origins, not an overwhelming of them or a substitution for them by micro-worlds or fixed definitions or one-dimensional prescriptions. Yes, we want to introduce the young to the forms of knowledge—the languages that constitute sense-making in our culture, that make the cultural conversation possible; and we want to do that in richer and more complex and more challenging ways. At once, we need to keep alive the young people's own stories, the consciousness of embeddedness in particular landscapes, in lived worlds to which the natural sciences and the human sciences and the arts and humanities refer. Such attentiveness to lived situations ought to continue, if we are concerned with empowering persons to name their worlds, to look through widening and diversifying perspectives, not only at the everyday but what surrounds

the everyday and what reaches back in time—what extends forward into what is undiscovered, what is not yet.

But this brings up another issue, one that ought to be of particular concern to teacher educators and that argues once again for attention to the contexts in which schools and those who work within them exist. If we acknowledge diversity and the presence of newcomers, we have also to acknowledge the existence of tensions or dissonances between the cultures of many students and the so-called "official" culture (whether described as "common learnings" or not). It is evident to almost all of us that what is in many senses "given" to certain educated, well-socialized, perhaps privileged groups in our society does not come easily to young people from other backgrounds whose lived lives and whose family lives are different in many, often overlooked ways. There are styles of thinking, ways of talking, funds of meaning transmitted by families who are newcomers to the mainstream that cannot but mediate what is taught in school—including the symbol systems we often take for granted as the only ways of thematizing a complex world. Not only is there a danger of further alienating such students by a lack of attention to what they live and what they know; there is a continual danger in the tendency to disconfirm their experiences and responses—because they do not participate in what we conceive to be "literate" discourse, because they do not value what we take for granted as valuable. Surely, it ought to be one of the responsibilities of teacher educators to acquaint teachers-to-be with sociological and demographic realities, even as it ought to be one of their responsibilities to enable people to attend, to try—now and then—to perceive what is taken for granted through others' eyes.

Equally important is the need to attend to the ways in which popular culture, including television programs and popular music and films, structures many young people's experience—fragments it, highlights it, offers symbols with which to represent it. For great numbers of young people today, the sounds of rock, the dizzying images of video, the bursts of pictured violence overlay and permeate their lived realities. They live, very often, bombarded with shards of sound and imagery, particles of information, slivers of news; and we who are teacher educators have to be aware of this even as we try to make available the sets of know-how that are so important in learning, even as we try to make visible and audible a more coherent, integrated world.

It is a matter, yes, of nurturing mindfulness; it is a matter of opening perspectives; it is a matter of empowering persons to become critically conscious of what works upon them and dominates them and sometimes coerces them from without. We ourselves have not yet learned enough to meet the challenge of the so-called information society—a challenge implicit in an overabundance of fragmented information, in an intense product orientation that obscures process and experiment and doubt. We have not met the challenge of the present confusion between information and knowledge; we have not learned to enable people to create knowledge out of information. We have not really discovered how to help them recognize television programs as artifacts rather than openings onto the common world. It seems to me that, if we are to educate for mindfulness, for a quality of attending, we need somehow to enable the young to recover themselves, to recover what might be called a lost spontaneity. By that I mean to regain contact with their original landscapes, their original sense of horizon, of the not yet. Of course we cannot sweep away the

symbolisms and the distortions of popular culture; we cannot simply substitute for it what we believe to be a more desirable, more liberating, more humanizing system of meanings. But we can do more to create the kinds of situations that release preferences, as Dewey once said, spontaneous preferences. We can create situations in which people begin once again to speak to one another in their own voices, to find out what they think by articulating, by expressing. Merleau-Ponty has written about speech as a genuine gesture, a kind of action that carries meaning to another. Expression, he said, brings meaning into being. Meaning and thought appear as a certain kind of silence is transformed. Our view of human beings, he believed, will remain superficial if we do not go back to that origin, if we do not try to find "beneath the chatter of words, the primordial silence" and do not try to describe "the action which breaks this silence." The spoken word, he said, "is a gesture, and its meaning, a world." To think that way, for me, is to think about enabling the young to come back in touch with what has been drowned out by the noise of the culture—the false languages of entertainment, the cost-benefit language of official explanations, the taken-for-grantedness and the passivity to which both give rise. It is to empower them to experience incompleteness—incompleteness and the sense of possibility. Only then are people likely to reach beyond themselves towards the horizons of their own lived lives. Only then are they likely to pose their own questions, to choose to learn to learn.

Openings are what is needed, openings and a consciousness of multiple realities. In the quest for a heightened quality of attending to situations, for a diversity of excellences, we need to think of the role of imagination as an opening to what is not yet. Imagination enables human beings to look at things as if they could be otherwise, to envisage alternative realities. At once, as Virginia Woolf once said, it enables them to "bring the severed parts together," to effect unexpected connections in experience, to create new orders, new spaces in which to move. Wallace Stevens wrote a poem called "Six Significant Landscapes" that suggests, especially in its last stanza, what this might mean.

> Rationalists, wearing square hats,
> Think in square rooms,
> Looking at the floor,
> Looking at the ceiling.
> They confine themselves
> To right-angled triangles.
> If they tried rhomboids,
> Cones, waving ellipses—
> As, for example, the ellipse of the half-moon—
> Rationalists would wear sombreros.

Pondering those words, I go back to the reports for a moment and think of the confined places the new prescriptions seem to create. It is probably clear that the poet is not saying that square rooms ought to be locked or that rational thinking ought to be forbidden. He is, after all, a poet discovering and setting forth resemblances between a certain kind of linear thinking and what might be called one-dimensionality. When he uses the term "Rationalists," he is inventing a metaphor that links a type of formalism and academicism to closed-in spaces, to predefined limits, to boundaries. The square hats respond to the square rooms, in the sense human reason was once thought of as a microcosm of the ordered, law-governed universe, itself bounded, mathematically

defined. As we who read move through the lines, we may feel ourselves moving outward beyond the boundaries to other sorts of spaces. Or may feel the triangles themselves involved in transformations, becoming rhomboids, cones. Then, suddenly, we are released to go still further—beyond diagram and abstraction to the actuality of the half-moon. If the rationalists have chosen to go with us, they themselves have been transformed, with their hard hats, their mortarbords becoming somehow pliable, dashing, shading the eyes and yet allowing glances at the moon.

I experience a consciousness of enlargement when I read that poem; and, when I put down the book and return to my teaching life, I find it subtly changed. Stevens has not taught me a new truth; but he has made me see what I already know somehow differently. I have been moved to reflect again on the place of reason in sense-making—the unquestionably central place of logic, mathematics, of cognitive acts like drawing inferences, defining, categorizing, generalizing, theorizing. I have become absorbed in pondering what I suppose might be called conceptualizing: making connections in experience, schematizing, patterning, ordering with the help of concepts like, say, figurative language, economic causation, simulation, organism, each derived from a particular subject matter field or discipline, each governed by a particular set of criteria or standards and associated with distinctive protocols, methods, ways of knowing how. And then I recall Immanuel Kant's reminder that "concepts without percepts are empty; percepts without concepts are blind." And I think again how important it is to ground such activities in a perceived landscape, a landscape of appearance, of shapes and sounds and colors apprehended from the standpoint of a living being enmeshed in an intersubjective world. There are, of course, disciplines—mathematics, let us say—that are characterized by a kind of formal purity that suggests a self-existence in some supersensible realm; but we do understand by now that mathematics is one of the languages available to us, the teachable languages, whereby phenomena can be related in specifiable ways, measured, equated, augmented, reduced, analyzed. W. H. Auden once wrote that "The Kingdom of Numbers is all boundaries . . . ": and those words, like Stevens', remind me of the importance of drawing reflective attention now and then to the peceived world where conceptualized objects exist as presences, reminding us why we "do" mathematics in our persisting quest for meanings, our restless effort to name and interpret our lived worlds. I cannot but recall Lewis Thomas—in *The Lives of a Cell*—talking about the phenomenon of the transformation of random matter into "the ordered dance of living forms," how that transformation has been thermodynamically explained as a flow of energy from the sun to outer space by way of earth—energy mathematically destined to cause the organization of matter into an increasingly ordered state. And Thomas writes of constantly changing conditions or rearrangement and of "a chancy kind of order, always on the verge of descending into chaos . . . " And then:

> If there were to be sounds to represent this process, they would have the arrangement of the Brandenburg Concertos for my ear, but I am open to wonder whether the same events are recalled by the rhythms of insects, the long, pulsing runs of birdsong, the descants of whales, the modulated vibrations of a million locusts in migration, the tympani of gorilla breasts, termite heads, drumfish bladders. A "grand canonical ensemble" is, oddly enough, the proper term for a quantitative model system in thermodynamics, borrowed from music by way of mathematics. Borrowed back again, provided with notation, it would do for what I have in mind

It is this sort of thinking that draws the rationalist from the single vision of the square room and makes him/her no less a mathematician or a logician or theoretical physicist. It is this sort of thinking that allows for the expression of more than one capacity in a chosen mode of activity. I think, in this highly technical period, this technicized moment of time, that we as teacher educators and teachers are all concerned about the seductions of the purely linear, the depersonalized, the morally neutral. Thinking of excellences in relation to the range of capacities and the multiple intelligences mentioned above, I would argue for enhanced attentiveness to ellipses and to Bach and to birdsong in whatever guise or order is appropriate for learners whose attention is directed to their worlds.

If there were time, I would argue for an increased centrality for the arts in teacher education and in the schools as well, and for an emphasis on informing awareness so that more and more art forms may be actively realized by diverse human beings in search of meaning, in search of clarity, in search of themselves. I often think of engagements with Stevens and Cezanne and Mozart and Alice Walker and Twyla Tharp and Tennessee Williams and so many others as paradigmatic for all learning because of the demand they make that the beholder or the listener be there in person, that he/she make an active and authentic effort to *achieve* the work, to bring it into existence for himself or herself. It is paradigmatic too because work must be done to realize it, the kind of work that involves a break with the conventional and the indurated (as Dewey put it), that opens to unsuspected possibility. Moreover, as Jean-Paul Sartre said about the writer, an artist appeals to a percipient's freedom and the work can never be entirely complete, can never be an end. The true end, Sartre wrote, which freedom itself adopts as its own "is what we call a value. The work of art is a value because it is an appeal . . ." It is an ongoing appeal; it is a demand—to use the poet Rilke's phrase—that "You must change your life." I cannot but wonder how excellence can be sought in the absence of such encounters, such appeals. I wonder as well how excellence can be sought if there is no space for encounters, no space for people to find their own voices, to speak for themselves.

A space for expression, a space for freedom, yes, and a public space. By that I mean, as Hannah Arendt did, a space where living persons can come together in speech and action, each one free to articulate a distinctive perspective, all of them granted equal worth. It must be a space of dialogue, a space where a web of relationships can be woven, and where a common world can be brought into being and continually renewed. Arendt was always interested in what she called the fact of natality, the idea that we have all come into the world by being born and that the world is constantly being renewed through birth. So she was always concerned about newcomers and new beginnings, as she was concerned about what it means to act in concert, to resist violence and passivity at once. She developed a notion of freedom in the context of a vision of a public space and on the ground of a belief in new beginnings. In any case, she wrote:

> Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token to save it from that ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and young, would be inevitable. And education, too, is where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and leave them to their own devices, not to strike from their hands their chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world.

Even as I believe a range of other literacies, I want to believe that there is a teachable capacity to bring into being an "articulate public" in a situation like the one Arendt described—a public composed of persons with many voices and many perspectives, out of whose multiple intelligences might come a durable and worthwhile common world. If we can think like that, if we can empower persons in the multiple domains of human possibility somewhat better and more energetically than we do, we shall not have to fear a lack of productivity, a lack of dignity or standing in the world. We will be in pursuit of the crucial values; we will be creating our purposes as we move. And move we must, in our multiple contexts, towards an untraveled world (to paraphrase Tennyson), whose margin cannot but fade for ever and for ever as we move. "How dull it is," the poet said, "to pause, to make an end." We are educators. The point is to begin.

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